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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1483  
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
AMEMBASSY SANAA  
USMISSION GENEVA 6692  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY RIYADH  
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 02961

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SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH FORMER PM SADIQ AL MAHDI

11. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

12. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR CALLED ON FORMER PRIME MINISTER SADIQ AL MAHDI JUNE 26. SADIQ DESCRIBED THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT AS HAVING THE WORST CHARACTERISTICS OF DICTATORSHIP AND A COALITION GOVERNMENT. THE GOS, HE SAID, IS FAILING DISMALLY ECONOMICALLY AND CAUSING THE PEOPLE GREAT SUFFERING. THE SEPTEMBER LAWS, HE DECLARED, MUST GO. PEACE AND A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT CAN STOP THE SUDAN FROM BEING A "MAVERICK" COUNTRY. (COMMENT: FOR THE FUTURE, IT APPEARS THAT SADIQ WILL WAIT ON THE SIDELINES AS THE AL BASHIR GOVERNMENT CONTINUES ITS DOWNWARD ECONOMIC PLUNGE. HE WILL THEN BE AVAILABLE TO PICK UP THE PIECES. END COMMENT)

13. AT THE INVITATION OF SADIQ AL MAHDI AMBASSADOR CALLED ON HIM JUNE 26. THE ATMOSPHERE WAS COMFORTABLE AND THE CONVERSATION RELAXED. DCM ATTENDED, SADIQ WAS NOT ACCOMPANIED.

THE GOVERNMENT  
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14. SADIQ DESCRIBED THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT AS HAVING THE WORST CHARACTERISTICS OF A DICTATORSHIP AND A COALITION GOVERNMENT. THE GOVERNMENT, HE SAID, IS DIVIDED BETWEEN THE NIP UNDER HASSAN TURABI AND THE ARMY, THOUGH HE IMPLIED THAT THE NIF HAD THE UPPER HAND NOW. HASSAN TURABI, SADIQ SAID, IS NOT A TRUE ISLAMIST BUT ONE WHO USED ISLAM FOR THE POLITICAL BENEFIT. SADIQ COMMENTED THAT HE HAD BEEN VISITED BY MEMBERS OF THE NIP (ALI OSMAN TAHA AND IBRAHIM MAHDI AMONG OTHERS) WHO WERE INTERESTED IN SECURING HIS SUPPORT. HE COMMENTED THE NIF HAD DIVISIONS AND TURABI WAS AWARE OF THEM. PRESIDENT AL BASHIR HAD ALSO VISITED HIM ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT/SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT, SADIQ SAID. SADIQ SPOKE WELL OF THE HONESTY OF AL BASHIR BUT WAS LESS THAN COMPLIMENTARY REGARDING HIS INTELLECTUAL ABILITY.

15. SADIQ WAS VISIBLY UPSET WITH WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS THE GOS DISMAL ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE WHICH HE EMPHASIZED IS CAUSING PEOPLE GREAT SUFFERING. HE ALSO CONDEMNED THE GOS FOR NOT REQUESTING INTERNATIONAL AID FOR THE FAMINE VICTIMS AS HE HAD DONE WHEN HE WAS PRIME MINISTER. AMBASSADOR AND SADIQ AGREED THAT THE NIF, SPECIFICALLY HASSAN TURABI, OPPOSED RELIEF AID EVEN IF ITS LACK WOULD CAUSE THE DEATHS OF SUDANESE PEOPLE.

PEACE  
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¶6. SADIQ APPRECIATED USG PEACE EFFORTS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT AT TIMES PROGRESS COULD NOT BE SEEN BUT HE SAID THE USG MUST PERSEVERE IN THESE EFFORTS. IT WAS ONLY A "GREAT POWER" LIKE THE UNITED STATES WHICH COULD MOVE BOTH SIDES TOWARD PEACE. PEACE REQUIRED A PLURALISTIC, DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY WHICH RESPECTED HUMAN RIGHTS. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, SADIQ SAID THE SEPTEMBER LAWS "MUST GO". AMBASSADOR PROVIDED A BRIEFING ON USG PEACE EFFORTS AND GAVE A COPY OF A/S COHEN'S SPEECH ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION. SADIQ REEMPHASIZED THAT PEACE AND A DEMOCRATIC, PLURALISTIC GOVERNMENT WOULD KEEP THE SUDAN FROM TURNING INTO A "MAVERICK COUNTRY". PEACE WOULD ALSO ALLOW SUDAN TO HAVE NORMAL RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

¶7. COMMENT: SADIQ SAID MANY THINGS WHICH HE KNEW THE USG SUPPORTS. HE IS IN FAVOR OF COOPERATION ON RELIEF, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND A PLURALISTIC DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY. IN SUPPORT OF THE LATTER, IS HIS STATEMENT THAT THE SEPTEMBER LAWS MUST GO.

¶8. SADIQ'S ASSERTION THAT HE IS BEING VISITED BY THE NIF AND OTHERS LOOKING FOR HIS SUPPORT IS TRUE. SADIQ IS A WILY AND UNSCRUPULOUS POLITICIAN. HE IS POSITIONING HIMSELF IN THE EVENT THAT THIS GOVERNMENT FALLS. ONE SHOULD NOT TAKE HIS STATEMENT ON THE SEPTEMBER LAWS AT FACE VALUE; HE DID NOT SAY HE WANTED A SECULAR STATE. SADIQ COULD FEEL COMFORTABLE INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT. HIS OPPOSITION TO THIS GOVERNMENT IS NOT DOCTRINE, IT IS OVER WHO HAS POWER.

CHEEK